

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06326 020834Z

16

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SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTER TACK SPEAKS ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A) PANAMA 4548 B) PANAMA 6029

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER TACK MADE STATEMENT AND ANSWERED QUESTIONS ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CORREGIMIENTO REPRESENTATIVES OCTOBER 31. HE DISPELLED RUMORS TREATY IS ABOUT TO BE SIGNED AND REPORTEDLY DESCRIBED PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS AS ENDEAVOR BY BOTH SIDES TO DETERMINE WHETHER AGREEMENT WILL BE POSSIBLE. THIS PROCESS SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY MARCH 1975. HE REPORTEDLY SAID U S WAS MAKING "GREAT EFFORT" TO APPROACH PANAMANIAN POSITION. HE REAFFIRMED GOP'S CHOICE OF NEGOTIATIONS, PLUS PRESSURE, AS MEANS TO SOLVE CANAL PROBLEM AND SPECIFICALLY DISCARDED STATUS QUO AND ARMED STRUGGLE AS ALTERNATIVES. HIS SPEECH WAS CLEARLY A FOLLOWUP ON EARLIER STATEMENTS BY FOREIGN MINISTRY TREATY ADVISORS DURING WHICH NEGOTIATIONS WERE DESCRIBED AS "TRANSACTION" AND NEW TREATY WOULD LEAD TO, BUT NOT IMMEDIATELY ACHIEVE, PANAMA'S GOALS (SEE REFTELS).
END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06326 020834Z

1. ONE BY ONE MINISTERS HAVE BEEN APPEARING BEFORE THE NATIONAL

ASSEMBLY OF CORREGIMIENTO REPRESENTATIVES (NACR) TO DESCRIBE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND PLANS OF THEIR MINISTRIES AND RESPOND TO INTENSIVE AND OFTEN CRITICAL INTERROGATION BY THE REPRESENTATIVES. FOREIGN MINISTER TACK'S TURN CAME OCTOBER 31. REPORTEDLY THE INTERROGATION WENT ON FOR SEVERAL HOURS. AFTER INITIAL REMARKS AND RESPONSES TO SEVERAL QUESTIONS, TACK ASKED THE NACR PRESIDENT TO EXCLUDE FOREIGN PRESS CORRESPONDENTS FROM THE HALL AND TO DECLARE THE REMAINDER OF THE MEETING SECRET. HIS REMARKS UP TO THAT POINT ARE REPORTED BELOW.

TELEVISED BROADCAST OF HIS REMARKS COINCIDED CLOSELY WITH PRENSA LATINA REPORT PUBLISHED IN FBIS BUT LOCAL PRESS NOVEMBER 1 GAVE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VERSION OF PART OF HIS REMARKS.

2. CONCERNING THE PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS, ALL REPORTS COINCIDED IN REPORTING TACK'S DENIAL THAT SIGNING OF A DRAFT TREATY IS IMMINENT, AND HIS STRESS ON FACT SPECIFIC TREATY LANGUAGE IS NOT NOW BEING NEGOTIATED. INSTEAD, TWO SIDES WERE DISCUSSING THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS AND EXCHANGING POSITION PAPERS. THE LATTER DID NOT EMBODY COMMITMENTS OR AGREEMENTS. THROUGH THIS EXCHANGE THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD ACHIEVE A "CLEAR VISION OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE." HE INDICATED THE TWO SIDES HAD AGREED ON A WORK PLAN TO CONTINUE UNTIL ABOUT MARCH 1975. BY THEN THEY WOULD KNOW WHETHER A NEW TREATY WOULD BE POSSIBLE.

3. THE TALKS, TACK SAID, HAD ACCELERATED SINCE THE SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING AND THAT U S IS MAKING "A GREAT EFFORT" TO APPROACH THE PANAMANIAN POSITIONS. ACCORDING TO PRENSA LATINA, TACK SAID: "THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT CHANGES (IN THE U S POSITION), ESPECIALLY ON THE MATTER OF JURISDICTION, WHICH ARE APPROACHING OUR POSITIONS." AS AN EXAMPLE, HE CITED FACT U S HAD ABANDONED THESIS THAT THE PANAMANIAN ISTHMUS IS OF GREAT STRATEGIC VALUE FOR U S AND THE HEMISPHERE.

4. TACK DESCRIBED THREE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO THE CANAL PROBLEM:

A. DIPLOMATIC NEGOTIATIONS, WHILE CONCURRENTLY SEEKING AND MAINTAINING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S CAUSE;

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PAGE 03 PANAMA 06326 020834Z

B. MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO WHICH WOULD MEAN THE MAINTENANCE OF US PRESENCE IN THE CANAL ZONE IN PERPETUITY; AND

C. ARMED STRUGGLE TO RECOVER THE CANAL ZONE.

5. ACCORDING TO PRENSA LATINA RELEASE AND TELEVISION REBROADCAST OF HIS REMARKS, TACK DISCARDED THE SECOND ALTERNATIVE AS NOT BEING EQUITABLE AND THE THIRD - ARMED STRUGGLE - AS BEING

NEITHER FEASIBLE NOR REALISTIC. THEREFORE, HE SAID, PANAMA HAS CHanneled ITS EFFORTS TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. PANAMA'S OBJECTIVE IS "TO STRUCTURE A TREATY PROGRAM WHICH WILL PROVIDE THAT THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF THE U S IN THE CANAL ZONE WILL DISAPPEAR AT A SPECIFIC TIME, AND PANAMA WILL ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE CANAL.

6. INTERESTINGLY, MATUTIO'S COVERAGE NOVEMBER 1 DID NOT MENTION THE MINISTER'S SPECIFIC REJECTION OF STATUS QUO AND ARMED STRUGGLE ALTERNATIVES. CONCERNING THE LATTER, MATUTINO CITED TACK AS RECALLING THAT NACR HAD GIVEN TORRIJOS SPECIFIC POWERS TO CARRY ON NEGOTIATIONS AND THAT IF AND WHEN TIME FOR ACTION ARRIVED, TORRIJOS WOULD SO INDICATE IN A "SHARP AND CLEAR MANNER." ESTRELLA'S REPORT DID NOT MENTION THE ALTERNATIVES.

7. COMMENT. TACK'S COMMENTS CLEARLY WERE INTENDED TO SHOW THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ARE PROGRESSING AND THE U S IS NOT BEING INTRANSIGENT, BUT NO COMMITMENTS ARE BEING MADE IN PRESENT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS. IN FOLLOWING UP ON LINE THAT FOREIGN MINISTRY TREATY ADVISORS HAVE TAKEN IN RECENT SPEECHES THAT PANAMA CANNOT IMMEDIATELY ACHIEVE ITS GOALS OF REMOVAL OF MILITARY BASES AND PANAMANIAN MANAGEMENT OF CANAL, BUT WOULD ACHIEVE THEM AT A SPECIFIC POINT IN FUTURE, TACK APPEARS TO BE PREPARING PANAMANIAN FOR A COMPROMISE IN WHICH U S PRESENCE WILL BE PHASED OUT DURING LIFETIME OF A NEW TREATY.

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